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STOCKTON INVESTIGATION NETS HIGH-LEVEL NARCOTICS ORGANIZATION

STOCKTON, CA--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott, San Joaquin County Sheriff Robert Heidelberg, Stockton Police Department Chief Mark Herder, Manteca Police Department Chief Charles Halford, San Joaquin County Assistant District Attorney James Willett, DEA Special Agent In Charge Javier Pena, and FBI Assistant Special Agent In Charge Nancy Nelson announced today that on March 10, 2005 arrests were made of eight persons in Stockton, California on federal narcotics charges, resulting in the seizure of 18 pounds of crystal meth, ten kilograms of cocaine, nearly \$300,000 in currency and nine firearms. Complaints charging SERGIO CURIEL, SR., 49, CELINA CURIEL, 44, SERGIO CURIEL, JR., 25, JOSE LUIS CURIEL, 22, EDUARDO CURIEL, 21, JESUS TAMAYO TAMAYO, 49, TERESA ISODORIA, 50, AND RAQUEL MONTENEZ ALCAZAR, 30, all of Stockton, California, were filed in Sacramento last Thursday.

This case is the product of an extensive multi-year investigation by the DEA, the FBI, the San Joaquin County Metropolitan Narcotics Task Force, and the Stockton Police Department. A wire interception order was used in the investigation. The California Attorney General's Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement assisted in surveillance during the three week wire interception. These agencies along with SWAT teams from the FBI, the Western El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team, and the Stockton Police Department participated in execution of search and arrest warrants.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Mary Grad and Richard Bender, who are prosecuting the case, the 70-page complaint and two affidavits in support of the wire interception authorization, all public records in the case, set forth details of an extensive, long running drug organization that moved large quantities of methamphetamine and cocaine from Mexico into the Stockton area for distribution throughout the Central Valley and South Lake Tahoe areas of California, the Pacific Northwest, and the Midwest.

Since early 2000, the DEA and the FBI working with the San Joaquin County Metropolitan Task Force have arrested numerous persons in San Joaquin County for distribution and possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine and cocaine. Many of those arrested drug dealers told law enforcement agents that SERGIO CURIEL, SR. and others working for him were the source of the methamphetamine and cocaine.

On February 18, 2005, and on March 4, 2005, federal law enforcement agents

commenced a wire interception on two cellular telephones used by the Curiel drug organization. Those calls and surveillance led agents to the seizure of 12 pounds of suspected crystal methamphetamine and two firearms from a vehicle in Southern California. In executing the search warrants last Thursday, agents recovered an additional six pounds of suspected crystal methamphetamine, ten kilograms of cocaine, seven firearms and \$296,900 in United States currency.

The United States Attorney will seek a federal grand jury indictment on the individuals arrested as well as identifying other associates within the Curiel drug organization. Further investigation will determine whether the United States Attorney can seek a mandatory life sentence for Sergio Curiel, Sr. under the federal continuing criminal enterprise statute (21 U.S.C. § 848).

United States Attorney Scott said, "The takedown of the Curiel drug organization resulted from five years of cooperative effort among DEA, FBI, the San Joaquin County Metropolitan Narcotics Task Force and the Stockton Police Department. This sustained joint effort, combined with the resources of the federal Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), through a federal wire and money for increased police surveillance, dismantled what we believe is one of the largest and longest running drug organizations in the Central Valley."

"DEA will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to move against these large drug trafficking organizations wherever they may be in this part of California," stated DEA Special Agent In Charge Pena.

FBI Assistant Special Agent In Charge Nancy Nelson added, "The success of this collaborative effort on the part of many law enforcement agencies illustrates what can be achieved from a single, focused effort at a significant crime problem."

As a recognition of the serious drug cases being worked in this region, the Eastern District of California has recently been allocated three additional OCDETF prosecutor positions.

If convicted, the maximum penalty under federal law for each offense of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine and cocaine is life imprisonment, and a \$4,000,000 fine.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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